

# Downtown Rochester

Master Plan Report ■ August 2010















# Rochester Downtown Master Plan

The Rochester Downtown Master Plan is the culmination of a nearly yearlong collaborative effort by the City of Rochester, the Mayo Clinic, the University of Minnesota Rochester, the Rochester Downtown Alliance and the Rochester Area Foundation. This unprecedented partnership was created out of a recognition that the future of our community is tied, in large part, to the health and well being of our downtown.

Rochester is in an extremely fortunate position. All of the elements necessary to create a truly exceptional downtown are already in place. We have a well educated and diverse population, a healthy and growing economic base, and a compact, walkable downtown situated in an attractive natural environment. Most importantly, we have public and private institutions committed to maintaining downtown Rochester as the heart of the community.

The Master Plan presents a vision of what downtown can become. The realization of that vision will be the result of thousands of actions made by both the public and private sectors. This Plan, when adopted, will provide direction and guidance to city leaders, downtown stakeholders and all of the individuals and organizations whose decisions will shape the future of downtown. It provides a framework for coordinating and integrating future development in a way that will allow downtown to reach its full potential. The Plan is not a static blueprint. We must constantly evaluate our progress and accomplishments and adjust our course as time passes and circumstances change.

Thank you to the thousands of individuals who completed surveys, participated in roundtable discussions, attended open houses, and contributed comments to the project web site. Your insights, ideas, and constructive criticism were invaluable in the preparation of this Plan. We hope that you will remain actively engaged in making downtown an exciting and vibrant place to work, learn, live, shop, and play as well as a place to heal.

Ardell F. Brede, Mayor, City of Rochester

Glenn S. Forbes, Medical Director, Community Affairs, Mayo Clinic

Stephen W. Lehmkuhle, Chancellor, University of Minnesota Rochester

Jon Eckhoff, Executive Director, Rochester Downtown Alliance

Steve Thornton, Executive Director, Rochester Area Foundation



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Positioning Rochester	
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## Acknowledgements

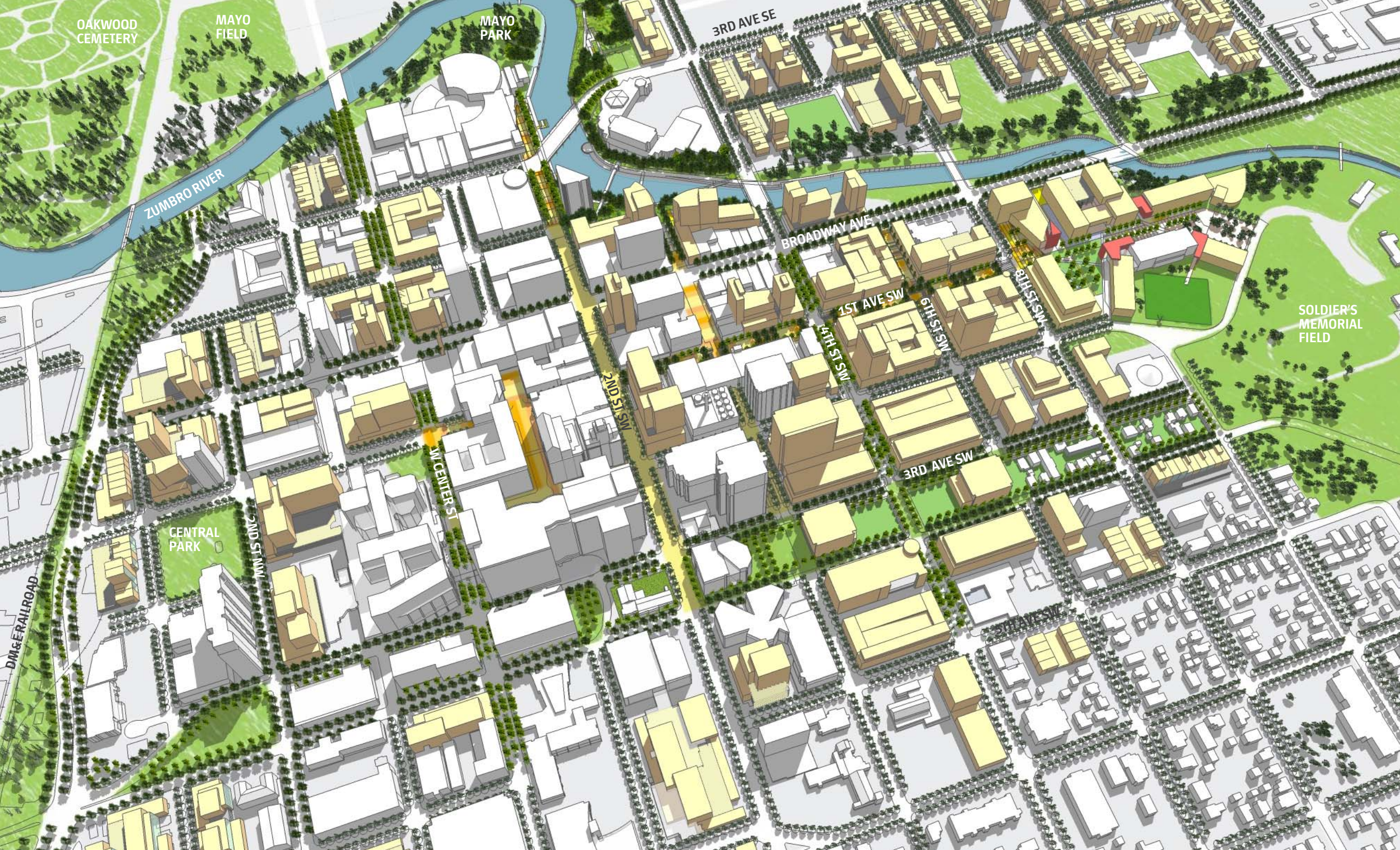




An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, showing a dense grid of buildings and streets. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "executive summary" is written in white, lowercase, sans-serif font in the bottom right corner.

# executive summary





OAKWOOD  
CEMETERY

MAYO  
FIELD

MAYO  
PARK

3RD AVE SE

ZUMBRO RIVER

BROADWAY AVE

1ST AVE SW

4TH ST SW

6TH ST SW

8TH ST SW

SOLDIER'S  
MEMORIAL  
FIELD

3RD AVE SW

2ND ST SW

1ST CENTER ST

CENTRAL  
PARK

2ND ST SW

DM&R RAILROAD



# Executive Summary

Downtown Rochester's unique position as home to the Mayo Clinic, the largest integrated medical practice in the world and the University of Minnesota Rochester, a forward-looking research university, both of which are continuing to grow and expand, offers a healthy economic base on which to project future civic improvements and development opportunities. With the combined strengths of these key institutions, an active, engaged community; and distinctive natural and architectural features, the Downtown has the potential to sustain itself as a significant economic force and vibrant community in the future. Rochester is fortunate to have many of the ingredients of a great downtown already—including historic architecture, large public parks, strong neighborhoods within walking distance, and the Zumbro River within the core. In addition to these physical assets, the City's future health is reliant on a strong, diversified economy that supports a similarly diverse community. This 2010 Rochester Downtown Master Plan process has given the City and its many constituents and residents the opportunity to reflect on the future of their Downtown, and shape a compelling vision that will provide a flexible framework for change for decades to come.

The Downtown Rochester Master Plan marks an historic moment for the City capturing the spirit of partnership between the public and private sectors. The master plan represents a commitment to the health of the Downtown that is shared by residents and employers who play such a significant role in the economic vitality and quality of life in the City. The collaboration entered into by the City, Mayo Clinic, University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR), the Rochester Downtown Association, and the Rochester Area Foundation to embark on this Master Plan lays the foundation for development of an organizational framework that can advance the plan, shepherding implementation of its priority projects and setting a national precedent for the level of collaboration undertaken by community leaders.

In the six years since the City last examined its Downtown with the 2004 Market-Based Downtown Plan, a number of significant changes have occurred that have impacted the development of Downtown and set the stage for a reassessment of future opportunities. In addition to ongoing Mayo Clinic growth, the University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR) has committed to developing a considerably expanded presence downtown with a permanent location envisioned at the southern end of 1st Avenue SW. Civic and cultural initiatives have also enlivened the downtown, with events and a farmers' market attracting new people downtown in the evenings and on weekends. Similarly, the City's interest in development of a downtown arts district and a planned expansion of the Mayo Civic Center facility reinforce the growing cultural scene. At the same time, a number of new private developments have been completed or are underway.

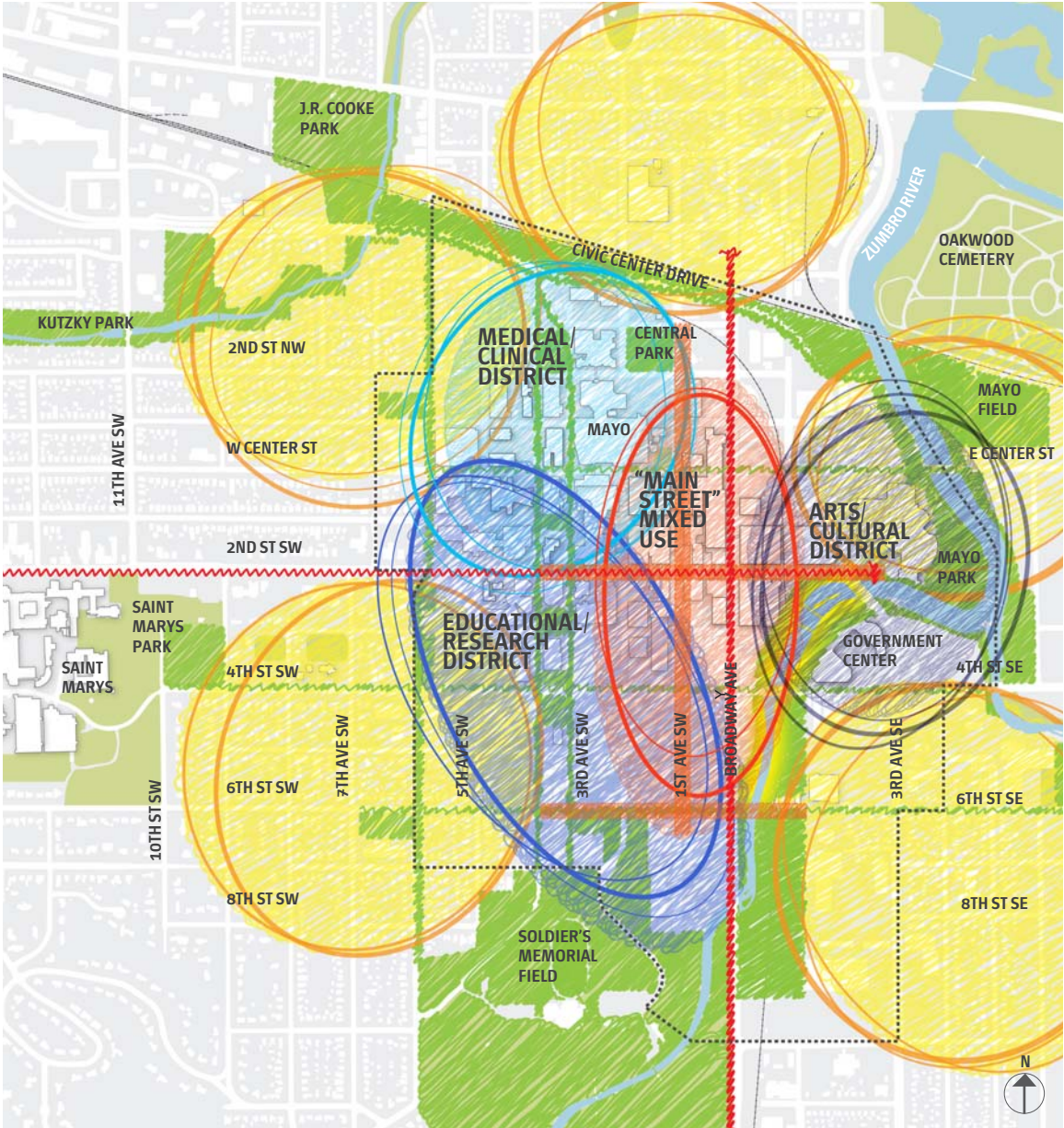
◀ ILLUSTRATIVE VIEW FROM THE WEST

These changes and improvements bring a new set of challenges. Projects must be assessed, successes must be reinforced, and a new, forward-looking vision must be defined to anticipate future development. Growth must be managed to ensure density that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhoods and designed for Rochester's continental climate. With increased density and population comes a further need to manage traffic into and out of the Downtown, critically examine parking and travel needs, and offer transportation demand management solutions. The Master Plan is fully integrated with a concurrent, comprehensive Mobility Study. The Downtown Rochester Master Plan is an extraordinary opportunity for the City of Rochester and its many devoted citizens to think broadly and comprehensively about its future by establishing strategic policies to attract, enhance and direct Downtown opportunities.



◀ THE STUDY AREA FOCUSES ON DOWNTOWN AND ROUGHLY INCLUDES THE BLOCKS BOUNDED BY THE RAILROAD TO THE NORTH, 6TH AVENUE W TO WEST, THE ZUMBRO RIVER AND 3RD AND 4TH AVENUES SE TO THE EAST, AND A SOUTHERN BOUNDARY THAT INCLUDES ALL OF SOLDIER'S MEMORIAL FIELD AND RUNS ALONG 9TH STREET SE EAST OF THE PARK AND ALONG 7TH STREET SW WEST OF THE PARK.

- OPEN SPACE
- PRIMARY STREET
- ACTIVE CONNECTION
- BIKE STREET/COMPLETE STREET
- RESIDENTIAL



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

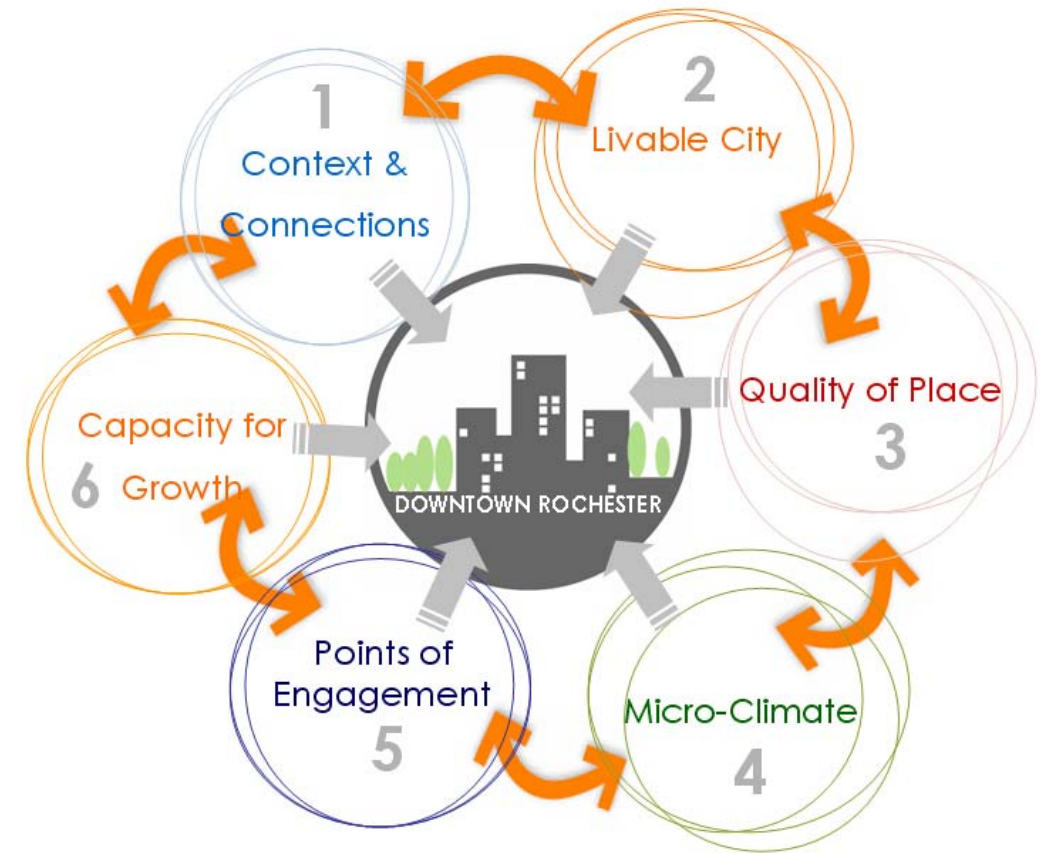


# A Flexible Framework for Development

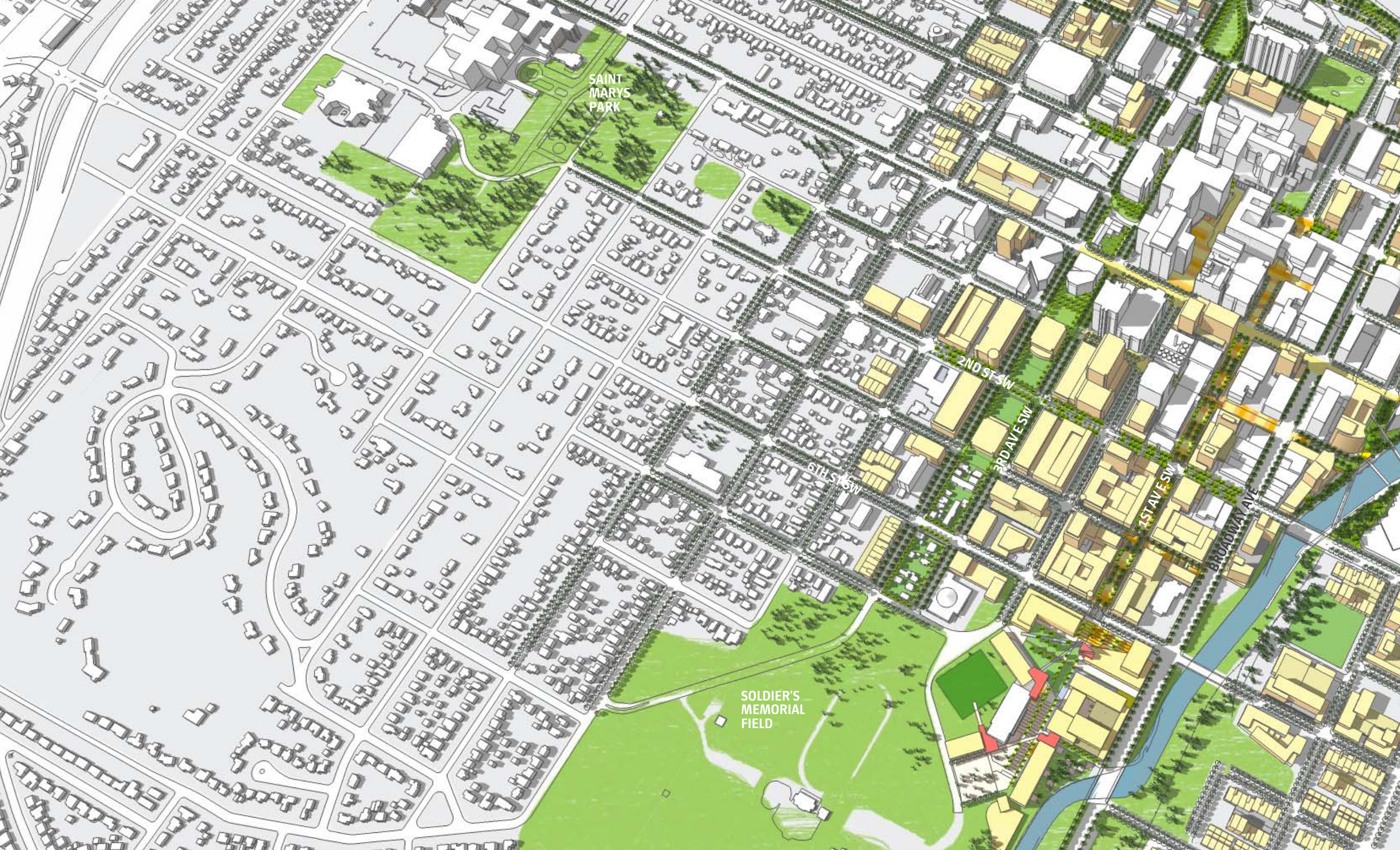
The master plan establishes a strong and sustainable framework of open space, streets, and an engaging public realm that forms a foundation within which future development will occur. The framework is composed of several parts: a framework of districts that envisions the specific mix of land uses that makes up each distinct area of downtown; an urban design framework that defines the urban form of the city by giving shape to the public realm through building massing, density, and the scale of streets; and an open space framework that sets the landscape character and helps define priority investments for streets, the river, trails, open spaces, and plazas. The mobility framework builds on the relationship between transportation and land use and balances an increasing number of mobility options—from transit to pedestrians and bikes to single occupancy vehicles—replacing priorities that privilege one mode at another's expense. And, finally, the sustainability framework ties together these components to achieve a plan that is not only environmentally sensitive and climatically appropriate, but also socially and economically sustainable.

The following principles directed the development of the master plan and the prioritization of its initiatives:

- Create a vibrant, economically healthy downtown that is walkable, livable and promotes human interaction
- Create strong connections between major activity centers including the CBD, UMR, and the Mayo Clinic
- Promote mobility options that reduce dependency on automobiles
- Create pedestrian friendly streets that balance use by people and automobiles
- Build upon historic buildings and landmarks that contribute to Rochester's history and culture
- Establish a connected open space system including the river
- Create strong connections between indoor and outdoor spaces at street level, subway, and skyway
- Develop buildings that engage the street, shape the civic realm and minimize energy use







SAINT  
MARYS  
PARK

2ND ST SW

3RD AVE SW

1ST AVE SW

BROADWAY AVE

6TH ST SW

SOLDIER'S  
MEMORIAL  
FIELD





## Development Opportunities

Downtown areas remain vibrant and competitive with their suburban counterparts because of their walkability and critical mass of activity. Within Rochester's core, multiple districts exist, each with their own unique mix of uses, development types, and future needs. The Master Plan builds on these unique districts, each one with a strong identity developed out of its own geography and opportunities, that together comprise a holistic Downtown.

Distinct development opportunities have been identified within specific mixed use downtown districts. These catalytic development opportunities should be viewed as exemplary development sites that can stimulate additional downtown development. They should be created to a high standard of design and urbanism that sets the precedent for future investments.

Development opportunities have been explored for the following areas:

- "Main Street" Mixed Use District
- Riverfront and Arts District
- Education and Research District









1ST AVENUE CORRIDOR AND DEVELOPMENT FROM THE SOUTH



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF RETAIL ON 1ST AVENUE, AND NEW PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED STREETScape

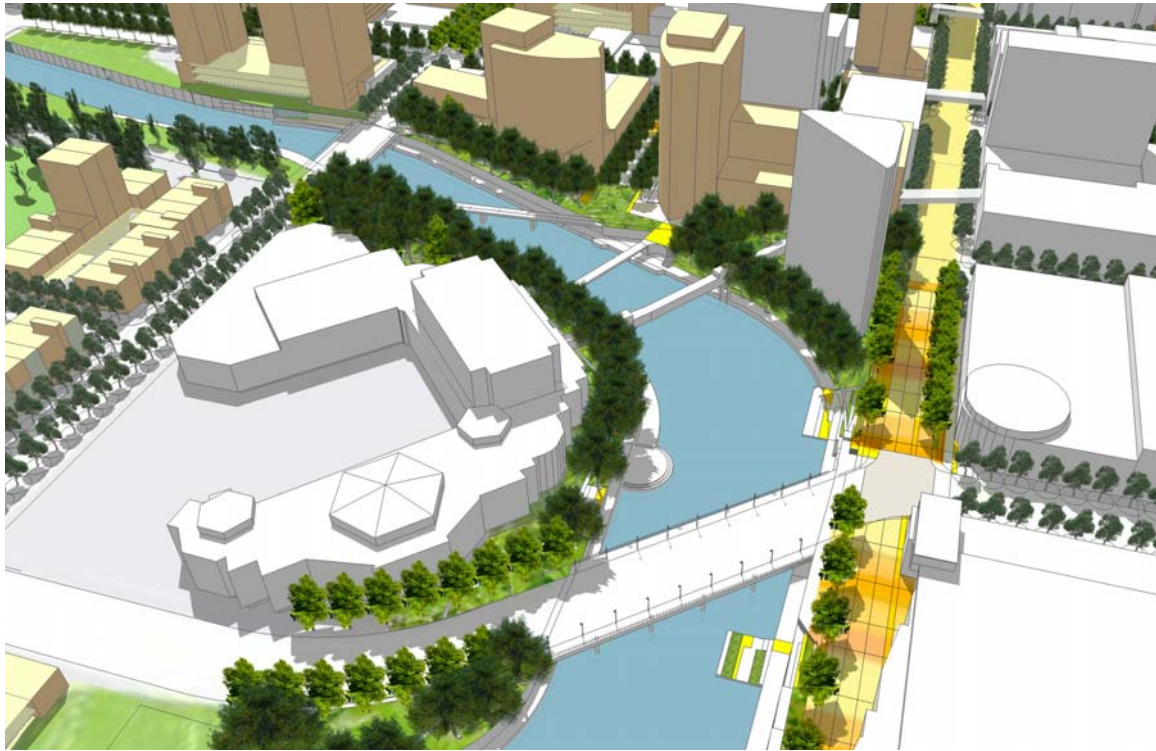
## “Main Street” Mixed Use District

Historically, 1st Avenue was in fact called Main Street, and the Plan calls for a return to the spirit of this former name, with proposed development that characterizes the pedestrian scale urban design and mixed use retail nature of historic “Main Streets” across the country and the world. First Avenue will form the main retail spine of Downtown, with housing and a mix of office, research, incubator and university-related uses.









VIEW DOWN 2ND STREET FROM THE EAST



ACTIVE USES ORIENTED TO THE RIVER, AND A RECONFIGURED RIVER'S EDGE CREATE A MORE INVITING FACE FOR THE ZUMBRO RIVER.  
VIEW FROM THE 4TH ST BRIDGE LOOKING SOUTH

## Riverfront and Arts District

Revitalization of the Zumbro River is one of the most significant development and open space opportunities within Rochester. New developments along the river's edge that take advantage of the waterfront are combined with the careful redesign of the public realm along the river, with improvements to landscape, continuous trail connections, and revitalized open spaces that take advantage of key locations along the river's edge.

NEW EVENTS AND GATHERING SPACES ALONG THE RIVER FORMED BY  
STREETSCAPING AND THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF 2ND ST SE FOR FESTIVALS





SOLDIER'S  
MEMORIAL  
FIELD

ZUMBRO RIVER

3RD AVE SW

4TH AVE SW

5TH AVE SW





POCKET PARKS ALONG 3RD AVENUE AND A DOUBLE ROW OF STREET TREES CREATE A GREEN CORRIDOR



VIEW FROM SOUTH TOWARD THE DOWNTOWN CORE

# Education and Research District

A new linear park along 3rd and 4th Avenues creates a green spine that defines the area and provides a distinctive setting for new research and commercial development along this north-south corridor that connects the new UMR campus to the established Mayo Clinic campus.





SOLDIER'S  
MEMORIAL  
FIELD

4TH ST SW

2ND ST





The public/private investments and collaborative organizational framework outlined in the Downtown Rochester Master Plan will help Downtown grow and evolve into an integrated, urban environment, helping the City maintain its leadership position in the region and establishing a national reputation as both a great medical community and great place to live. While Rochester is an outstanding city in many ways—high caliber downtown employers who attract smart, innovative employees; quality residential housing stock, and excellent natural resources—it must continue to evolve and make downtown improvements to retain and enhance its leadership position. There will be ever-increasing competition both locally and globally to attract the best employees, companies, businesses, services, retailers, families and young professionals and the Master Plan will help Rochester to compete.



